4474 a 44
2

A SERMON

Preached on the 8. day *of May* 1615. *in the Parish-*Church of S. STEPHEN in Walbrooke London.

*At an anniuersarie Solem-*nitie and assemblie of the Companie of Grocers of LONDON.

In commemoration of their *ancient and first beginning* to be a Companie.

BY R. F. DOCTOR in Diuinitie.

LONDON
Printed for *William Aspley.*
1615.

BRITISH MUSEUM

TO THE Right Worſhipfull *and his ſingular good* PATRONS, the Companie of the GROCERS.

R. F. *Wiſheth the* increaſe of all peace and happineſſe.

RIght worſhipfull, although it be much againſt my diſpoſition,

Who preach ſo often, to commit any one Sermon to the publike view, eſpecially this, whereof I haue as meane conceit as of the reſt ordinarily deliuered. Notwithſtanding, if it may giue any ſatisfaction, I doe humbly intreat, that you would be pleaſed to accept of ſo ſmall a teſtimonie of my greater thankefulneſſe. To whom as I acknow-

ledge

ledge my ſelfe much obliged, ſo ſhall I euer be readie to render a farre greater ſignification of my dutie. And albeit this ſubiect deſerueth to bee amplified much more then my leaſure in the throng of other buſineſſe would at this time permit: yet vnderſtanding of a rumour ſpread, as if vpon conference with ſome, I ſhould beginne

to alter my minde; I haue chosen rather to set it downe word for word as it was at that time vttered, then to enlarge any branch of it. I laboured most to deliuer the naked truth in this point, without ornament of speech: such nakednesse is neuer to bee ashamed. Thus desiring Almightie God that the simple truth may so worke vpon the consciences

of

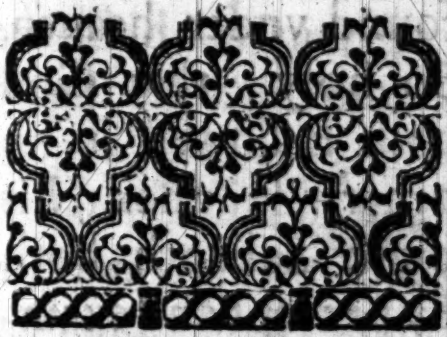
of euery one for the eſtabliſhing of peace, order, and gouernment amongſt vs, that we may haue a moſt tender care of all ſuch Oathes from that Oath of Allegeance to his Maieſtie, to the Oathes taken by the meaneſt Church-Wardens in our pariſhes: I doe humbly commend you in my praiers to the gratious protection of the Almightie.

The Epistle.

From S. Stephens Walbrooke, London. May 25. 1615.

R. F.

HEB.



Heb. 6. 16.

For men verily ſweare by him that is greater: an Oath amongſt them is an end of all ſtrife.

AN oath is the ſtrongeſt cõfirmation of a truth auerred, and the moſt religious obligation of any thing promiſed that is to be found

found vnder heauen. So holy, that God hath hallowed it no otherwiſe then his owne Sabaoth both by precept and example. For as the fourth Cõmandement is not only ſanctified by diuine precept, *Remember thou keepe holy the Sabaoth day*, but by Gods owne example, *Hee reſted the ſeuenth day, wherefore the Lord bleſſed the ſeuenth day and hallowed it*. In like manner this affirmitiue part of the third Commaundement is ſancti-

ſanctified by precept as a part of Gods worſhippe, *Eſſ.* 45. 23. *Euery knee ſhall bow to me, and euery tongue ſhall ſweare by me.* And at the 13. verſ. before my text, wee haue his owne practice and example: where he confirmeth his promiſe to *Abraham* by an Oath, As is the inſtitution, ſo is the forme, and end of an Oath: for wee ſweare by a greater then our ſelues, to the end that ſuch ſwering may bee a preſent remedie againſt all ſtrife and

and contention amongſt vs. Let theſe be the two parts of my text, *The forme* and the *end of an Oath.*

1 The Forme, *That men ſweare by a greater.*

2 The End, *That it makes an end of all ſtrife.*

1 This greater, by whom men ſweare, is no leſſe then God himſelfe, for in *Ier.* 5. 7. God chalengeth thoſe *who ſweare by them that be no Gods.* An Oath therefore is the inuocation of the name of God, reuerend and holie then is an Oath, becauſe

becauſe reuerend and holy is his name; So deepely is this point imprinted in the harts of men, that naturall Religion hath taught the very Heathen themſelues, to ſweare by their gods, as *Laban* ſware by the *God of Nahor*, but *Iacob*, by *the feare of Iſaake*, that is by the true God whom *Iſaake* his father worſhiped. Gen. 31. 53.

This point alſo is expreſſed, by the very ceremonie of an Oath: *Ioſeph* put his hand vnder *Iacobs* thigh, and

and the ſeruant of *Abraham* vnder the thigh of his Maſter. Becauſe (as *S. Auguſt:* and *Ambros* expounds it) God our Sauiour was to proceed out of the loines of *Abraham*, *Iſaake*, and *Iacob*; and as of old they put their hands, vnder the thigh of thoſe Patriarches of whom Chriſt was then to come: ſo to the ſame purpoſe do Chriſtians lay their hands vpon ſome part of that ſacred booke wherein Chriſt is reuealed. By ſuch

ſuch like ceremonies do we ſignifie that we ſweare by a greater, and that greater to be no other then God, and our Sauiour.

The 3 grounds or reaſons of inuocating the name of God in an Oath as they do naturally riſe of that terme of my text ἐν τῷ μείζονος ſo will they cleere the way vnto that which followeth.

1 Men by ſin haue loſt their credit, and therefore doe they pawne the credit of him

him who is truth it ſelfe. And in caſe of neceſſitie for want of other ſufficient pledge God doth vouchſafe to pledge his truth for honeſt men that mean well, The truth and credit of God is greater then mans, and therefore men ſweare by him, as by a greater.

2 An Oath is the manifeſtation of a ſecret truth or intention of the heart for to ſweare in things manifeſt, is the taking of the name of God in vaine.

But

But God alone is the knower of the heart and reynes, therefore he onely muſt teſtifie, that which is perfectly knowne to none but him. He is greater in knowledge then man, in knowledge of ſecret thoughts and things that are moſt hidden, therefore man ſweareth by him as by the greater.

3 If a man ſhall forſweare himſelfe, or violate his Oath, the wrong is done directly vnto God. His truth is falſified, his name

name is abuſed in the higheſt degree. Great reaſon therefore that he ſhould be iudge in that caſe. To redeeme his ſacred name by taking vengeance vpon periured perſons. From this ground it ariſeth that the Maieſtie of God is called vpon in an Oath. *Vt teſtis & vindex.* And therefore as God doth pawne his ſacred name for our credit, ſo doe we lay in a counterpawne of our ſaluation, or of ſomewhat that is deareſt vnto vs

for

for our fidelitie. Which we muſt forfeit if wee keepe not our Oath.

The Apoſtle hath giuen an inſtance of a perfect forme in this kinde, 2. *Cor.* 1. 23. *I call God to record vpon my Soule.* There is God *Teſtis & Vindex*, *I call God to record*, there is Gods pawne for *Paul*. *Vpon my Soul*, There is *Pauls* counterpawne for his fidelitie. *In animam meam*, vpon the perill of mine owne ſoule be it if I falſifie Gods record. If *Paul* now

now had abuſed the teſtimony of God, he had forfeited his own ſoule.

This forfeiture was of old expreſſed by *God doe ſo to mee and more alſo*, or ſuch like formes of execration. Now is it giuen for the concluſion of our ſolemne Oathes. *So help you God.*

By this I hope you conceiue the forme, and by the forme, the nature of an Oath, together with the reaſons why wee ſweare only by the name of

God

God as the greater.

Greater in name and credit, that his Credit might ſupplie the defects in ours.

Greater in the knowledge of ſecrets, that he might teſtifie the ſimple intentions of our hearts.

Greater in power and iudgement that he might take vengeance of ſuch wretches as dare abuſe his ſacred maieſtie.

Therefore *men verily ſweare by him that is greater.*

2 From this diuine forme

forme is deriued ſo excellent an end of an Oath, that it makes an end of ſtrife. *A fonte pietatis fluit rimus charitatis.* And fit it is that ſo worthy a ſtreame ſhould flowe from ſuch a fountaine. For a greater teſtimonie of ſincere truth, nor a cleerer euidence of the moſt ſecret intentions cannot be giuen then is an Oath. Wherefore after that this witnes hath once ſpoken, after that this obligation is once ſubſcribed by laying the

hand

hand vpon the booke, and ſealed by kiſſing of the ſame, it were a great indignitie offred to that diuine Maieſtie, once to call in queſtion, or to moue contention about that which a lawfull Oath hath before determined.

An indignitie I ſay, ſeeing the God of truth hath vouchſafed himſelfe to interpoſe as a witneſſe of ſinceritie, and a reuenger of periurie.

Let an oath therefore bee an end of all

ſtrife amongſt vs, I pray God it may, and God forbid but it ſhould.

Wherefore (Right-worſhipfull and beloued) ſeeing my finger is now vpon the ſore, giue me leaue to touch it a little to the quicke. If any aske what I haue to doe to intermedle; Let this be mine *Apologie*. Firſt my profeſſion bindeth mee to be a peacemaker amongſt you being of the Companie aſſembled within my cure. As in

generall

generall I began the laſt yeare.

Next I muſt euer acknowledge this Companie my worthy Patrons, And my ſelfe alſo by further fauours to bee an vnworthy member of the ſame. And thereby alſo doe I ſtand obliged for the reſoluing of your conſciences in this point of ſcruple, and for the faſter knitting of you vp in the band of peace.

Vnderſtand therefore, that there be two kinde of Oathes, the

one is assertorie, and the other promisorie.

The Oath of asseueration by which the truth of any thing past or present is auerred must needs be kept by such as haue any conscience at all. The reason is, because the breach thereof falleth directly, whollie, and all at once vpon the Conscience, and therby becommeth most sensible.

2 But an oath of promise being once past, is in time forgotten, as if

if the binding power thereof did by little and little weare away, which though it bee not ſo in truth, but only in the error of our obliuious nature, yet is this the moſt charitable reaſon that can be rendred, of the too too much neglect of Oathes in this Cittie. Yet is this the Oath which is to bee intended in this buſineſſe, and which is mentioned in this Scripture, for in the 13. Verſe before my text, it is ſaid. *When God made the pro-*

miſe vnto Abraham hauing no greater to ſweare by, he ſware by himſelfe. This is that Oath which you haue ſolemnly taken, wherein you haue pawned the ſacred Maieſtie of God, that you will faithfully keepe your promiſe, by laying hand vpon the booke, and kiſſing the ſame. Wherein if at any time hereafter you ſhall faile, you haue forfeited that intereſt, which you haue in that Maieſtie by the bond of thoſe words.

So

So help you God.

Now the Queſtion is no more but this.

A Cittizen hath vndertaken a double Oath.

1 As Freeman of the Cittie he ſweareth *To be obeiſant and obedient to the Maior and the Miniſters of this Cittie. To maintaine the franchiſes and Cuſtomes thereof. This Cittie to keepe harmeleſſe in that him lieth. To bee contributorie to all manner of charges &c. bearing*

part as a freeman ought.

2 As a member of this fellowſhip he hath likewiſe ſworne.

Truly to obay all manner of rules, impoſitions and ordinances that be made, or hereafter ſhall be made and lawfully ordained for the ordering of the ſaid fellowſhip.

Whether this man thus obliged may indeauour or conſent not to diſorder, but to diſmember this fellowſhip, by the ſeparation of himſelfe and

and others from the ſame.

Whether hee may labour to bee freed from thoſe charges to which he hath ſworne to be contributory.

Whether by this preſident of *Innouation*, to incourage other Companies vpon the like pretence to attempt the ſame; be to obay the gouernours, to maintaine and keep this Cittie harmeleſſe to his power.

I will not ſit Iudge

or determine vpon any mans conſcience, but only lay open the Queſtion in ſuch manner, as euery man in his conſcience may be his owne Iudge.

There be two points without compaſſe of this queſtion.

1 That thoſe who haue not taken this Oath may vpon iuſt cauſe ſeeke: and that authoritie in the Eye to a more publike good may command a ſeperation, we call it not into queſtion. For this is their act and

not

not thine, and therefore concerneth not this point.

2 It is not denied but a Company may be imagined ſo apparantly peſtilent to the common wealth; ſo tyrannicall and burdenſome to the ſworn members of the ſame, as they may lawfully deſire and endeauour a redreſſe, and for want of that a ſeperation, for they are ſworne onely to that which is lawfull. But this is farre from our

point,

point, I finde it not obiected.

What then might be the motiue *The Reformation of Abuses.*

Beloued, this word *Reformation* is a good word: but it hath guilt many a rotten peece of wood.

For what Faction or Schisme euer entered into Church, what rebellion or insurrection euer began in Common-wealth, which masked not vnder a pretence of *Reformation?*

Abuses there are, and

& euer wil be, though a new Companie ſhould drop from the clouds. And a reformation of abuſes is euermore to be deſired.

But firſt. Is there no meanes of reformation already eſtabliſhed equiualent to that which is deſired?

If not. May no meanes bee thought vpon, by ioint ſute to be obtained, without ſuch innouation and ſeparation?

If not. Is all this cleere, or is it queſtionable

onable and doubtfull, and as yet vndetermined?

If it be but questionable, then make this a *Quære*.

Whether such a scruple arising in thy minde, or suggested by others, may dispence with any brãch of a solemne Oath which is cleere and without question? Lay thine Oath then in one Scoale with all the waights that therunto belongeth, as hath beene deliuered: and let thy conscience

bee

bee an indifferent Iudge, whether a ſcruple remaining as yet queſtionable may ouer-ballance the ſame?

Let mee expound two places of Scripture vnto you, the one as a precept, the other by way of example, both concerning the validitie of a promiſſarie Oath.

In the 15. Pſalme, the queſtion is, *Who ſhall dwell in Gods Tabernacle, or reſt vpon his holy hill?* That is, Who ſhall be a liuely member of the Church

Church militant c
earth, or enter into
eternall reſt in hea-
uen? One maine
branch of the anſwer
is at the fifth verſe, *He
that ſweareth to his
neighbour, and diſap-
pointeth him not, and
though it be to his owne
hinderance.* As it is the
publike good which
is pretended, ſo let our
caueat be, what is in-
tended in this at-
tempt. Is it the zeale
of ſome publike good
which conſumeth vs
in this buſineſſe? Or
is it the hope of ſome
aduan-

aduantage or ſuppoſed dignitie, ſome profit, or expected libertie vnto our ſelues, which putteth fire vnto vs? Remember this is not a priuate oath twixt neighbour & neighbour, whereof the *Pſalmiſt* ſpeaketh, but publike and ſolemne, and ſo much the more obligatorie. The breach thereof is directly againſt heauen and earth. And the ſcandalous example of that breach may extend to all the Companies of this Citie,

Citie, as a motiue for the slacking of their Oathes.

Therefore whatsoeuer aduantage, libertie, or dignitie may accrue thereby, keepe thine oath, though it be to thine owne hinderance. If thou mean to dwell in Gods Tabernacle on earth, or to rest vpon his holy hill in heauen: for the anchor of that hope lieth at pawne.

2. An example we haue; *Ios.* 9. 18. where the children of *Israel* mistaking the *Gibeonites*

nites for farre ſtrangers, who indeede were their neighbors, did make a league with them, and confirmed the ſame by ſolemne Oath.

1. This was an oath againſt the Law of God, *Deuteron.* 7. 2. *Thou ſhalt not make a Couenant with them, nor haue compaſſion on them.*

2. It was an Oath raſhly taken by the Princes, in that they asked not counſell at the mouth of God, but ſuffered themſelues to be deluded by

by their old apparell, their patched bottles, their clouted shooes, and mouldie bread.

3. It was an Oath guilefully giuen by the *Gibeonites*, *Dolus personarum*, a mistaking of the persons themselues to whom they sware.

Notwithstanding all this, the Princes of the people that sware, durst not satisfie the people in breaking their Oath.

Saul afterwards did breake it in slaying the *Gibeonites*, a long time

time after, when time might ſeeme to haue worne out the ſenſe of it, 2 *Sam.*21.1.

Heereupon God ſent three yeeres famine. *Dauid* inquireth of the cauſe of that famine. God anſwereth, *It was Saul and his bloudie houſe for killing the Gibeonites, to whom the children of Iſrael had ſworne.* And beſides this, for further ſatisfaction, the ſeuen ſonnes of *Saul* were hanged vp in the mountaine before the Lord.

Obſerue

Obſerue therefore, that this being a raſh, guileſull, and vnlawfull oath, had no binding power in it ſelfe: yet ſeeing the name of the God of *Iſrael* was pawned by his people, it pleaſed God rather to diſpence with his owne Law, then with their Oath, in regard of ſcandall amongſt Heathen people, that they might not ſay, *Iſrael* made light account of the name of their God.

Beloued, this Oath

of

of yours is no vnlawfull Oath, but approued of all. It is no raſh Oath. If it were, you ſhould not only condemne your ſelues, but an infinite number beſides for taking the ſame.

It is no deceitfull Oath. The words are plaine and ſimple. Let mee adde further: It is not the Oath of Princes to their ſlaues appointed to the ſlaughter, as the *Gibeonites* were, but of the members of a fellowſhip and incorporation.

ration. It is not ſingle, but doubled, doubled with ſolemnitie to this Companie, to this Citie.

Now if wee were but men; Heathen men that knew not the true God: yet he that ſhall breake ſuch an Oath, ſhall not only loſe his credit for euer amongſt men, *etiamſi per plures Deos iuret*, but vengeance alſo frō aboue would follow him, as the wiſe man auerreth. Not by any power in the Idols, by whom the

Wiſd. 14. 30.

Hea-

Heathen ſweare, but becauſe in euery falſe religion there is ſome truth intwined by the vertue of that truth, the vengeance of that diuine power which is acknowledged by Idolaters, ſhall follow periured perſons.

But wee are Chriſtians, worſhipping the true God and Sauiour of the world. This obligation then is doubled vpon vs: and what will prophane perſons obiect if we breake it?

Wee profeſſe our

ſelues profeſſors of the Goſpell of Chriſt, and worſhippers of the true God truly. What will our aduerſaries in this profeſſion ſay, when they ſhall ſee vs paſſe ouer theſe diuine bonds as matter of meere formalitie? I will tell you what they doe ſay; That our Fore-fathers in this Land vnder their Religion were faſter tied by their bare word and promiſe, then *Proteſtants* at this day by their moſt ſolemne Oathes.

If

If they ſhall inferre this *à non cauſa, pro cauſa*, imputing it to our Religion, it is well knowne wee can eaſily quit them with their owne. But in ſome men of our Religion wee muſt confeſſe it is inexcuſable. Come we then to our generall concluſion.

If there be any Freeman of this Citie, member of this Companie, who doth or ſhall deſire not to bee ſubiect to ſuch lawfull ordinances as hee is formerly ſworne vn-

to; or ſhall endeuour or giue cõſent to thoſe that ſhall endeuour for any ſuch innouation or ſeparation as may proue dangerous either to the ſhaking of this Cittie gouernment, or the weakening of this preſent Companie.

Before that ſuch a one proceede any further, Let him lay his hand vpon his heart, & ſeriouſly conſider the binding power of a ſolemne promiſſorie Oath in generall as hath beene deliuered, together

together with the contents of his double oath in particular; Next let him see what warrant he hath either vpon hope of any dignitie, libertie, or aduantage to himselfe in priuate, Or vpon any scruple arising in him, or suggested by others for the publique, to crosse any branch of either Oath: Or what power can dispence with his conscience in this case, the subiect of his Oath remaining as it doth.

It is cleere thy Oath

doth not binde thee from ſeeking the redreſſe and reformation of any abuſe within thy calling whatſoeuer, God forbidde it ſhould, Neither doth it forbid thee to aduice in thy place about the meanes of reformation; Onely abſtain from that meanes which ſhall tranſgreſſe any part of thine Oath.

If there bee no meanes of reformation either already eſtabliſhed, or to bee obtained, but ſuch: Let that

that be the act of authority, the invention of superiours and not thine, Let it be their determination, rather then thy seeking. Touch not thine Oath. Remember how farre thou art obliged before by a divine bond, and thou maiest not play fast and loose with the eternall God. Hee is that greater in my text by whom we sweare, and an Oath ought to bee the end of all strife amongst men, in priuate societies, in Com-

panies,

panies, in Citties, and in kingdomes. Bee it farre from vs then to contend or striue against any branch of our Oath, least wee seeme to striue against God. And then shall we kicke against the prickes, to the wounding of our selues, our soules and consciences for euer.

Of which Conscience as of a most precious Iewell, that euery one of vs may haue a tender care, together with a most holy Reuerence of

Gods

Gods moſt glorious name in theſe ſacred couenants and celeſtiall bonds, hee giue grace who is the fountaine of all Graces, Ieſus Chriſt, to whom with the Father and bleſſed ſpirit, three perſons and one God, be all praiſe and glory.

Finis.